

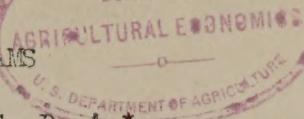
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BUREAU OF



THE CONTRIBUTION OF FARM MANAGEMENT
IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROGRAMS

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The subject for discussion this evening, "Types of Economic Material and Methods of Procedure in their Utilization in Developing State or Regional Programs," is not a new one. It is one to which extension leaders have given increased thought and emphasis with the expansion of the Extension Service organization.

Why Have a Program?

In looking ahead in the development of the Extension Service, it was realized by the leaders that, with the increased demand for extension work came also increased responsibility in formulating the type of agricultural extension program that in the long run would do the most people the most good. They further realized that as farm folks became more acquainted with extension work and learned more of the simpler and easier practices, their demands would more and more center upon the more complex and harder problems of agricultural production and distribution.

In order, therefore, to keep pace with progress in building a substantial vehicle for the dissemination of facts to farmers and others, the task of developing an extension program that will meet the present-day needs and demands of farmers has become a job challenging the best combined thought of administrators specialists, and farmers. As a basis of sound judgment, we are also experiencing an increasing demand for the careful analysis and relating of all the available facts bearing upon the development of successful agricultural areas, types of farming, and farm organization.

Out of the total of 2,900 counties in the United States that have 400 or more farmers, 2,200 now have a county agricultural agent -- about 900 have a home demonstration agent, and about 450 have an assistant county agent or a county club agent. We, therefore, see that to-day we have a very large and widely representative vehicle for the dissemination of facts for successful agricultural

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development, and the job of making it the success it is to-day and of guiding its future activities along right lines is no small task or responsibility.

If it were necessary to dwell longer on the question of "Why Have a Program?" we would answer: For the twofold reason:

1. We must have a program based upon a background of facts in order to have a grasp of the sound things to do. Not many mistakes are made where the procedure has been set forth through a careful analysis and study of facts. They encourage agreement and lessen argument.

2. We must have a program as a protection against the unsound things we are too often expected to do. Quite often a propagandist, or one conscientious but simply overenthused, comes along with brand new or revolutionary ideas, expecting extension workers to immediately adopt and carry out these new ideas. This disease, although usually found only in individuals, sometimes does show up with organizations.

A program based upon facts is the safest instrument of measurement in getting at the net worth of the many suggestions extension workers are faced with continually. It should be organized and conducted from the standpoint of the best interests of the farmer, the farm woman, and the boy and girl. It should set forth a broad rural development program, including the farm, the home, and rural youth, that each may see and carry out his part. It must include the individual, the community, and the national phase.

Considerations in Determining a Program.

Having gotten before us some of the reasons why a program is important, perhaps the next question to be raised is "What Should Enter into the Determining of a Program?"

The agricultural extension program should be based upon an analysis of facts regarding what has happened and what is happening in agricultural production, prices or costs, movement, and consumption. We should know the trends and present and prospective developments and relationships. Since the particular types of economic material useful in determining programs are to be taken up by Mr. Fuller of North Dakota, I shall not develop this phase of the subject further at this time.

Assembling and Relating Facts Essential

Utilization of the full resources of the agricultural college, experiment station, and U. S. Department of Agriculture staff is essential in developing the agricultural extension program. The research men have the facts, and the Extension Service is in a position to use them. In fact, it is our daily business.

There is a big job of assembling, relating, and applying the facts. Unless it is the job of someone to assemble and relate this material and the right type of organization and procedure is set forth that inspires real team work of the full extension organization, it will not be utilizing its full resources, nor will it give its largest possible returns. Extension work has about reached the size and about reached the period in its growth when someone could well devote full time to this important activity. In some States, this has already happened. Present-day procedure is no reflection on past procedure. A 1915 automobile was all right in its day but would not meet present-day traffic pressure as effectively as the 1928 model.

The Farm-Management Program

The farm-management extension leaders are in full accord with the movement of increased emphasis on fact analysis as a basis of improving extension programs. At the start of farm-management demonstration work by Dr. C. B. Smith in the northern and western States in 1914, he stated that one of the principal objectives of that work should be that of aid to the county agent in securing and analyzing the type of data that would keep his program consistent with the facts regarding farm-management developments in his county. To be more specific, the object of farm-management demonstration work as set forth in the Federal project July, 1914, was as follows: "To conduct demonstrations for the definite purpose of (1) increasing the farmer's net income, (2) increasing the efficiency of the county agent's work.

In 1921, in setting forth the objectives of various phases of agricultural extension work, Doctor Smith stated as follows regarding farm-management extension work:

"We believe in farm-management extension work. It has a basic, long-time value outweighing the difficulty of showing results immediately.

"We believe that 30 to 50 actual farm records in every county every year furnish a helpful guide to the county agent as to what is actually happening on the farms in his county. The analysis of such records serves to keep his plans consistent with the facts. This should be the ultimate goal toward which farm-management extension should be directed.

"We believe that the farm-management demonstrator should have a large part in the final determination of every county agricultural extension program. Any extension program over a period of years will fall short of its possibilities unless organized and carried out with full comprehension of the trend of economic events.

"We believe that the farm-management demonstrator should be supported by a strong agricultural economics department at the college, doing original research work within the State and rendering substantial aid in interpreting and disseminating fundamental information."

The objectives of farm-management demonstration work have, therefore, been quite definite and clear-cut for many years. The States to-day showing the largest results are those that laid out a rather definite long-time procedure several years ago. They knew pretty definitely where they were going at the time of starting, had sufficient man power to do the job, and have stayed pretty close to a definite course. I mention this mainly for the reason that, unless we build a program with rather definite cumulative results, we will not be in a position to fully contribute our share in the basic fact analysis in program determination.

The following outline is set forth in the way of specific types of facts that the farm-management extension leaders are disseminating through the use of the various approved extension methods. Research facts supplemented by local facts supplied by farmers who cooperate with the county extension service in keeping and summarizing accounts are the basis. It is designed to give farmers both the internal and external facts essential to good farm organization and operation procedure.

1. Facts about farm incomes and cost of operation and why some farms pay better than others. Among the more significant factors the following are important:

- a. The effect of size of business on efficient operation and satisfactory income returns.
- b. The relationship of enterprises in an efficient and profitable farm business.
- c. Cost of production and the reasons back of the wide variation from farm to farm.
- d. The many related factors affecting income.

These problems are being approached through the use of simple farm accounts and enterprise-cost accounts. To keep the importance of these individual farm factors continually available to farmers, as well as to fully understand them as a guide in extension program development, we believe that every county agent should have from 30 to 50 records kept, summarized, and analyzed each year. It is a program aimed to help farmers to make more money by adopting improved farm-organization and management practices.

2. Facts about price, production, and distribution trends for the various agricultural commodities. The reasons are given so far as can be pointed out about immediate and long-time changes and situations for the different farm products.

Lectures, local-leader training schools, farm-business clubs, commodity clubs, circular letters, news articles, etc., have been the main avenues or means of dissemination of this material.

"The Agricultural Situation," issued monthly, and "The Agricultural Outlook," issued annually by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, are examples of the type of information being used. The principal objective of this type of work is that of helping the farmer to procure the type of facts that best enables him to look ahead in the planning of his production and operation programs.

This illustrates the two principal types of subject matter used in developing a farm-management extension program. Time will not permit an analysis of the various means and agencies used, but it should be said that we find farm-management subject matter lends itself to the use of all approved methods of extension the same as other lines of extension endeavor. Much development has been made in applying approved methods of extension to this subject, but much is still to be accomplished. We have sometimes been criticised for being unable to make the contacts in farm-management extension work that were made by other subject-matter specialists. Perhaps in some cases the criticism was justified. At any rate, the situation is such in a number of States at the present time that the farm-management specialist is making as many contacts as any other specialist on the extension force. The outstanding reason for this as previously indicated is the application of the various means and agencies in approved extension procedure.

3. Aid in developing sound extension programs. The material referred to in 1 and 2 is also used for meetings held with other specialists, supervisors, or administrators in formulating extension programs. After these data have been properly related with facts of other specialists, meetings are held with groups of farmers where the facts are interpreted by the farmers into an extension program. These meetings have been of State, regional, and county types. This is a program organized and conducted by administrative supervisors of extension work designed to make the whole extension program the most efficient. Farm-management workers participate to the full extent of their resources in the working out of programs or the solution of specific problems.

From the educational point of view, this largely means developing not only new subject matter but a new approach and a new application of already known principles and facts to extension program building. Mr. Eugene Merritt of the Extension Service will have more to say about this phase of the program.

Benefits Twofold to Farm-Management Workers

The benefit of this movement to assemble, interpret, relate, and apply facts in the development of State, regional, or county extension programs are two-fold from the standpoint of the farm-management worker.

When properly organized and carried out, the economic facts should aid other extension workers to view the various commodity lines of production from a farm unit standpoint. The material should show the importance and the relationship of a given line of production to other lines for different areas or different types of farming in a successful farm business. The farm-management material represents a cross-section picture of the farm business. For example, we have in some certain

counties a summary of financial records on 30 to 50 farms for a number of years. How does the county agricultural agent use this summary in order to adopt a better county program of work? In most programs, there are too many projects rather than too few, so that the task is one of selecting a few projects that are of most importance in the county.

The summary of these accounts has been prepared by the farm-management demonstrator and the county agricultural agent to show the factors that have most influence on determining farm profits, such as livestock efficiency, crop yields, per cent of land in high-profit crops, etc. The summary will also show what per cent of the total income on these farms is from cattle, hogs, poultry, corn, oats, wheat, etc. Good judgment would indicate the advisability of carrying projects on the important enterprises and in such a way that the results procured would lead to practices that will improve the important factors influencing farm profits in the farm as a whole. In other words, county agents are not so much interested in improving an unimportant part of the business and, therefore, desire to choose first the lines of work that will increase farm incomes most.

If the county agent finds from the summary that it is highly important to increase crop yields and that corn is the most important crop, he will then turn to the agronomy specialist for a project that will increase the yield of corn. He may favor a lime-and-legume program in connection with a project on corn-disease control or field seed selection. When he turns to livestock efficiency, he may find that hogs are the most important class of livestock, and the livestock specialist may feel sure that a swine sanitation project is the outstanding need for increasing profits on hogs.

This process is continued until the important phases of the work have been covered and certain projects have been rejected because they would have less bearing on farm profits.

From this process we see that in the last analysis the county agent must mainly shoulder the responsibility of what should be included in the county program of work. To the extent, therefore, that the county agent has records and facts he speaks with a voice of authority. His whole attitude and bearing is of a man who knows. His word carries conviction. Farmers believe in him because he has facts back of him and his feet are on the ground. Surveys in 15 States show that faith of farmers in the extension agent is one of the biggest of all factors in successful extension work and in getting new practices adopted. Local facts are the big things. Facts as shown by records on 25 to 50 farms are, therefore, of the highest importance.

On the other hand, when properly organized and conducted, the relating of the economic facts to production facts is most helpful to the farm-management and agricultural-economic workers. We must not become so involved in formulating mathematical puzzles that we lose sight of the fact that the individual farmer, to be successful, must adopt improved and economical production practices and at the same time have something to sell. In addition to the better adjustment of production to demand, efficient production still seems to be a factor in successful

farming. We must also keep in mind that in most instances extension folks, as well as farmers, are interested in applied agricultural economics.

Extension Specialists have Twofold Responsibility in Building Programs

Extension specialists make large contributions in the building of programs. They should continue to do so, but it should be fully realized that every extension specialist has a twofold responsibility in formulating and projecting his program.

1. They must so outline and project their own lines of work to make them the most efficient.

2. They should so relate their own lines of activity to other extension endeavor to make the extension service organization as a whole the most effective or efficient.

Perhaps in past performances the stress has been placed more upon efficient plans along individual lines than upon relating the various lines of endeavor to make the extension programs as a whole the most effective. Developments at this time would seem to indicate that the emphasis could well be placed upon the latter responsibility.

In conclusion, it, therefore, appears that the increased emphasis on fact analysis as a basis of program development, to be of greatest benefit, must be designed to give all those interested in agricultural development a picture of the problems -- their relative importance -- the type of program to meet the problem, and the contribution of the various subject-matter departments, agencies, and farm folks in improving or solving these problems. To the extent it succeeds in this respect, it should make the job of every extension worker a bigger and more definite job and the whole organization more efficient.

